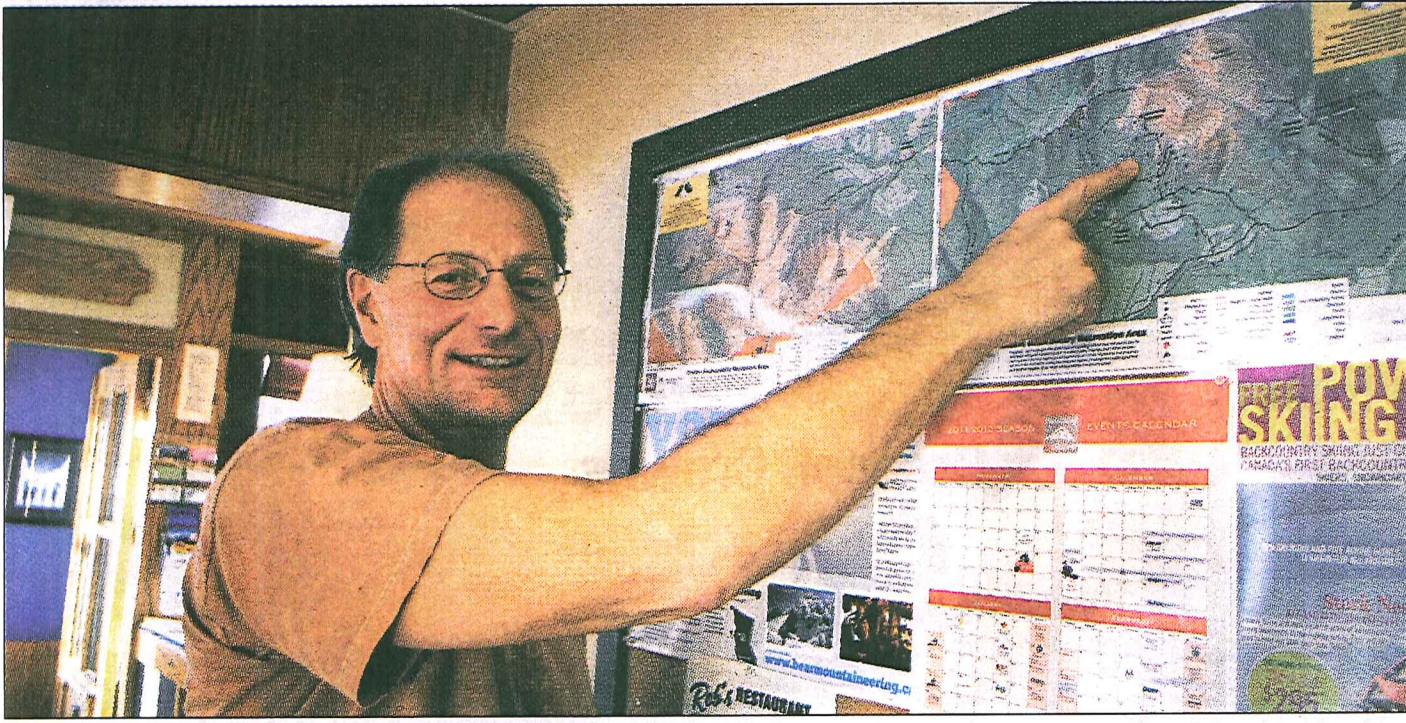


**COMMUNITY**



Brian Hall points out the Hankin-Evelyn trail network on a map. Hall was named Innovator of the year by Northern BC Tourism at an awards event in October 2011.

# Brian Hall named this year's 'Innovator'

By Cameron Orr  
Smithers/Interior News

The work of a local man to develop the Hankin-Evelyn cross country ski trails has been recognized by Northern BC Tourism.

At an October award ceremony the organization named Brian Hall as the recipient of the Innovator award. (Another local man received the Protector award. That story on Page A21).

The ski trails fit a niche that Hall said was empty until recently.

"Hankin-Evelyn was my vision and I've always, for years and years, thought one thing that was missing was free backcountry skiing. You can do a lot of backcountry skiing up in the alpine but you need some skills and knowledge," he said. "I found an area here that didn't have a history of any other use, so there'd be no conflict."

Through conversations with the provincial government he said they eventually set aside 3,770 hectares for non-motorized recreation. Grant money has raised approximately \$900,000.

Among the work done to the area is developing a day-use shelter in an alpine area and they fixed a historic fire look-out.

The money raised for the project goes into the community, said Hall, which creates jobs which maintain the trails.

The trails have been well used. He said last year they around 2,000 users, and so far this winter they have already hit 1,000.

He said there is also a fair amount of didn't expect.

"We're getting people from outside the area as well."

While the idea to

create the ski trail system was his, he wasn't alone in making it happen.

Kevin Eskelin, he said, has been a huge supporter. He's from the Ministry of Natural Resources, under the Recreation Sites and Trails B.C.

"The support from Kevin has just been

unbelievable," said Hall. "So it's just been a combination of community and government working together to get this accomplished."

As for his award, Hall is one of those modest types who maintains that it's not about what you win.

"It's nice to be recognized for what you

do, but you do those things because you're passionate about them."

He continued, "I guess if the Innovator award is for the idea, then I appreciate that. But getting the idea from just being an idea to actually having it happen took a lot of energy from a lot of people."

Cameron Orr/Interior News